

in 2011 to develop training materials in preparation for the deployment of iEHR to the Federal Health Care Center (FHCC), North Chicago, IL, on December 1, 2011.

██████████ told us that she traveled to Hawaii in May 2011 for a series of "information meetings" with iEHR developers and support staff from PIHCS, TAMC, and VA's Office of Information & Technology (OI&T). She said that her role in these meeting was to advise on ██████████ and ██████████ needed to "roll out" iEHR throughout VA. She also said that the meetings were held over 3 days, from May 24–26 and that on the third day, May 27, VA Secretary Shinseki and several high-level VA officials, including the VA Chief Information Officer (CIO), arrived for a demonstration. Further, she said that she did not choose the venue for the May 2011 meetings but that she was invited to attend by ██████████ OI&T, and ██████████ VHA, who were iEHR Project Managers ██████████ told us that the meetings were held in Hawaii because the users and developers of iEHR were stationed in Hawaii, and the system was in use there. She said that she did not believe there were reasonable alternatives, i.e. teleconferencing, to holding face-to-face meetings with the users and developers of the system. She further said that by holding the meetings in Hawaii, instead of another venue, they could work with the clinicians who used the system without taking them away from their clinical duties for an extended period. (b) (7)(C)

██████████ told us that before traveling to Hawaii on June 14, she met with VeHU ██████████ in Kansas City for a 2-day "brainstorming" meeting. She said that the purpose of this meeting was to come up with ideas on how to present VeHU training in a "virtual" setting due to the reduced travel budget for FY 2012. She further said that the ██████████ made up an ██████████ to oversee the VeHU conference. She told us that they met in Kansas City, a central location, because the ██████████ are scattered throughout the country. (b) (7)(C)

██████████ told us that she traveled to Hawaii from June 14–18 to conduct user training/testing for iEHR in a "fictitious" environment in order to allow Members of Congress, DoD, and other stakeholders to view iEHR software without compromising patient privacy. She said that attendees at these meetings, which were held at PIHCS, included ██████████ the ██████████ and ██████████ who ██████████ from the VA office in charge of ██████████ and ██████████ who used ██████████ She said that she observed provider training on iEHR software and met with ██████████ to map out a plan for the "demonstration" account. She further said that they held the meeting in Hawaii, rather than on the mainland, because all the attendees, except for her and ██████████ were stationed in Hawaii and because they could involve ██████████ and other health care providers who used the system without removing them from their clinical duties for an extended period. She said that in-person meetings were the most efficient way to get the job done in a short time, because there was a push to get the demonstration accounts up and running within 3 weeks. (b) (7)(C)

██████████ told us that she and a contractor employee traveled to Hawaii from August 26 to September 4, 2011, to create training videos for future users of iEHR (b) (7)(C)

software. She said that these videos were created for users in at FHCC, North Chicago, when the system was deployed there in December 2011. She said that during this trip, she and the contractor created 13 training videos of practitioners conducting training on iEHR software. She said that she traveled to Hawaii to create the videos because the iEHR prototype was up and running at PIHCS and the subject matter experts, trainers, and users of the system were located there.

██████████ told us that as ██████████'s immediate supervisor, she was the final approving official for ██████████'s 2011 travel. ██████████ said that ██████████ traveled to Hawaii three times in 2011 to develop training materials leading up to the deployment of the iEHR "presentation layer" (user interface) in North Chicago later that year. She said that ██████████ had to travel to Hawaii to work with developers and users of the iEHR presentation layer and that ██████████ also made several trips to North Chicago in 2011 for the purpose of implementing it there. She said that, in her opinion, ██████████'s three trips to Hawaii, and the associated expenses, were essential to the transaction of Government business. She said that she did not believe that there were any practical alternatives to travel in these instances. She further said that ██████████ traveled at the request of ██████████ and ██████████ who are the VHA and OI&T leads, respectively, for iEHR; the system was up and running in Hawaii; and system developers and clinical users were located there. ██████████ told us that ██████████ needed to work with the clinicians who used the system in order to develop a training plan for future clinical users. (b) (7)(C)

Travel records reflected that in June 2011, ██████████ traveled to Hawaii for "user testing/training" following a VeHU ██████████ "brainstorming" meeting in Kansas City. ██████████ told us that ██████████ was in charge of the VeHU Conference for the past 10 years, which was held every year (or every other year) to train clinical application coordinators and clinicians on the VA electronic health record. She said that, as part of the Government's effort to reduce the cost of conferences and travel, the VeHU was being moved to a "virtual" environment and that ██████████ met with the track directors in Kansas City to discuss ideas for shifting it to a virtual environment. ██████████ said that, following the meeting with the VeHU ██████████ ██████████ traveled to Hawaii to develop training materials for iEHR deployment. She further said that, over the summer months, the developers in Hawaii continued to refine iEHR in preparation for its deployment to North Chicago. (b) (7)(C)

Travel records reflected that ██████████ traveled to Hawaii from August 26 to September 4, 2011, to "create training videos for deployment of the presentation layer to North Chicago." ██████████ told us that during that trip, ██████████ recorded the practitioners who used the system to create training videos for use when the presentation layer was deployed in North Chicago later that year. She said that ██████████ traveled to Hawaii because the developers and clinicians who used the system were located there. ██████████ told us that there was no practical alternative to ██████████'s travel, because it would be "extremely difficult" to produce training videos while not on site. (b) (7)(C)

██████████ told us that he was an iEHR ██████████ and that he lead a team of clinical applications coordinators who were stationed in Hawaii where the prototype was (b) (7)(C)

developed. He said that [REDACTED] was the VA lead for iEHR. [REDACTED] said that he traveled to Hawaii from Bay Pines in May 2011 for a demonstration of the iEHR prototype in conjunction with VA Secretary Shinseki's visit. He said that [REDACTED] also traveled to Hawaii in May 2011 for the demonstration and that [REDACTED] asked [REDACTED] to participate, since she was an expert on developing such demonstrations. He said that [REDACTED] returned to Hawaii in June 2011 and late August for user acceptance trials and development of training materials in preparation for the December 2011 deployment of the iEHR "presentation layer" in Chicago. [REDACTED] told us that, in his opinion, [REDACTED]'s travel to Hawaii was essential to the conduct of Government business. He said that [REDACTED] traveled to Hawaii three times between May and September 2011, because the VA/DoD iEHR demonstration and deployment were on an accelerated schedule. He said that [REDACTED]'s travel "leveraged" greater savings for the Government by enabling the rapid deployment of the system.

(b) (7)(C)

[REDACTED] told us that [REDACTED] was responsible for producing training videos and developing the on-line curriculum for web-based iEHR training and that [REDACTED] traveled to Hawaii in May, June, and August 2011 for this purpose. She said that in May 2011 [REDACTED] worked with her and the other trainers to become familiar with iEHR and observe iEHR training first-hand. She said that [REDACTED] and the trainers discussed the content of iEHR training and the technical aspects and dissemination of the training products. She further said that [REDACTED] watched her provide training to VA and DoD clinicians on May 25 and 26 and that [REDACTED] recorded the training sessions on her iPhone in order to come up with a plan for the best way to present the material on-line. [REDACTED] told us that she used her personal iPhone and portable hard drive to record and store iEHR training videos. She said that the recorded videos contained no personal health information or other Privacy Act protected information, as they used a "demonstration" account containing fictitious data.

(b) (7)(C)

[REDACTED] said that two other individuals traveled from the mainland with [REDACTED] in May 2011. One was [REDACTED]'s assistant and the other was a database expert, who helped set up a "test account" for demonstration. [REDACTED] said that [REDACTED] and the trainers needed to work closely with the database expert to set up the test account and correct errors. [REDACTED] further said that [REDACTED] and her assistant traveled again to Hawaii in June 2011 to begin videotaping the iEHR training modules. She said that the purpose of the initial recording was to get an idea of what the videotaped training "would look like" and that they recorded [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] training clinicians on iEHR.

(b) (7)(C)

[REDACTED] told us that [REDACTED] and her assistant returned to Hawaii in late August to complete the actual recording of the iEHR training videos. She said that this visit as "a very busy time" and that [REDACTED] and her assistant spent Monday, Tuesday, and part of Wednesday (August 29-31) recording the training. She said that [REDACTED] and her assistant then edited and posted videos on line. She further said that it required [REDACTED] her [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] working together to do the videotaping effectively.

██████████s *Personal Days in Conjunction with Travel to Hawaii.*

██████████ told us that she took "personal days" (non-working days, travel comp time, and/or annual leave) in conjunction with her travel to Hawaii in May 2011 and again in August/September 2011, at no cost to VA. Travel records reflected that she requested 3 "personal days," May 21–23, in conjunction with her travel to Hawaii in May 2011 and that she did not claim lodging, per diem, or transportation expenses for these days. Travel records also reflected that she took 4 "personal days" in conjunction with her travel to Hawaii in August/September 2011 and that she did not claim lodging, per diem, or transportation expenses for these days.

(b) (7)(C)

██████████ told us that she kept her rental car while on "personal days" in conjunction with travel but that she did not seek reimbursement for the charges associated with the rental car on the days she was not conducting Government business. She said that after she returned from the last of her three trips she became aware of a requirement that, when combining personal days with official travel, the traveler must return the rental car used for Government business before taking leave or other personal days.

(b) (7)(C)

Federal travel regulations and VA policy state that cars rented for official travel may not be used for purposes other than official travel and any additional costs incidental to the personal use of a rental car will not be reimbursed. However, they do not explicitly state that the traveler must either return the car before taking personal time in conjunction with official travel or terminate the rental car contract with the rental agency and create a personal contract for use of the car on personal days. The OIA ██████████

██████████ told us that when an OIA employee submitted a travel report showing only one contract for both official and personal use of a rental car, she required the employee to pay for the portion of the rental car bill attributable to personal use and advised the employee that, in the future, he or she should terminate the Government rental contract and have a new contract created for personal use. However, she said that OIA did not have a written policy to that effect. Travel records reflected that ██████████ did not claim reimbursement for the rental car, mileage, or parking for the personal days that she used the rental car.

Conclusion

We did not substantiate the allegation that [REDACTED] misused Government resources for nonessential travel to Hawaii. Based on [REDACTED]'s and other knowledgeable witnesses' testimony, we found that [REDACTED]'s travel to Hawaii in 2011 to develop [REDACTED] was necessary for the expedited deployment of iEHR to North Chicago in December 2011. Further, we found that her personal travel in conjunction with her official travel to Hawaii did not result in any additional costs to VA. In addition, we found that [REDACTED] did not intentionally violate Federal regulations or VA policy by retaining the rental car while on personal days in conjunction with official travel and that there was no added cost to VA for her personal use of the rental car. Therefore, we are closing this investigation without issuing a formal report or memorandum.

(b) (7)(C)

Prepared by [REDACTED]

6/12/2012
Date

Approved by: [REDACTED]

6/12/12
Date